

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 191625Z AUG 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7860
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, PDEV, IS
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH ADVISOR TO PRIME MINISTER ON (ISRAELI)
ARAB AFFAIRS

1. EMBOFF SPOKE AUGUST 18 WITH BENJAMIN GUR ARYEH,
ADVISOR TO THE PRIME MINISTER ON ARAB AFFAIRS, WHO MADE
THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

2. EQUAL RIGHTS. THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT WAS A
POLITICAL STATEMENT FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE ARAB STATES,
NOT A PROGRAM. (COMMENT: GUR ARYEH'S REMARKS WERE
VERY SIMILAR TO THOSE OF THE MFA'S GONEN -- SEE TEL
AVIV 6114, PARA 6 -- WHICH SUGGESTS THAT AFTER THEIR
INITIAL SURPRISE, ISRAELI BUREAUCRATS HAVE NOW BEEN
GIVEN THE LINE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT).

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3. ISRAELI ARAB AFFAIRS. BEGIN HAS OFFERED GUR ARYEH,
A CAREER CIVIL SERVANT, A FOUR YEAR STINT AS HEAD OF
THE ARAB AFFAIRS OFFICE. (COMMENT: UNDER THE
LABOR GOVERNMENT, THIS OFFICE WAS OCCUPIED BY
SHMUEL TOLEDANO, A QUASI-POLITICAL FIGURE WHO
MANAGED PATRONAGE AND ELECTORAL PROBLEMS IN THE
ARAB SECTOR. THAT THE LIKUD GOVERNMENT INTENDS

TO KEEP THE ARAB ADVISOR'S OFFICE RELATIVELY FREE OF POLITICS WOULD SEEM TO BE A GOOD SIGN. SINCE THE TAKEOVER BY THE LIKUD PARTY, THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL SUGGESTIONS TO MERGE GUR ARYEH'S OFFICE WITH SOME BUREAUS IN THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT, I.E., TO TREAT ARABS IN THE OCCUPIED AREAS AND ISRAELI ARABS THROUGH A COMBINED ADMINISTRATION. GUR ARYEH HAD ARGUED SUCCESSFULLY AGAINST THESE PROPOSALS ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE WEST BANK ARABS WOULD HAVE HARMFUL EFFECTS ON ISRAEL'S ARAB CITIZENS. THIS REFLECTS A NOT UNCOMMON OPINION AMONG ISRAELIS, WHO HAD HIGH HOPES AFTER 1967 THAT ISRAELI ARABS COULD SERVE AS "A BRIDGE" TO THE ARABS OF THE TERRITORIES AND BEYOND. IN TIME, WHAT HAPPENED WAS NOT SO MUCH AN IMPROVEMENT IN UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN ARABS AND ISRAELIS AS AN ACCENTUATION OF THE PROFOUND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM--AND FOR THE ISRAELI ARABS, A DEEPENING OF THE PROBLEM OF THEIR DUAL NATIONAL IDENTITY.)

4. IKRIT-BIRAN. GUR ARYEH HAS ADVISED A MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST PERMITTING EX-RESIDENTS FROM RETURNING TO THE FORMER (ISRAELI) ARAB VILLAGES OF IKRIT AND BARAM. HE ARGUED THAT THIS SPECIAL EXCEPTION TO THE WHOLE QUESTION OF "REFUGEES" WOULD RUN COUNTER TO THE ARGUMENTS ISRAEL IS DEFENDING RELATIVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO THE LARGER REFUGEE ISSUE. FURTHERMORE, THE JEWS NOW LIVING ON THE LANDS WHERE THE VILLAGES WERE FORMERLY SITUATED ARE THEMSELVES REFUGEES FROM IRAQ AND MOROCCO. GUR ARYEH BELIEVES THAT AS A RESULT OF HIS STATEMENTS AND DOCUMENTS HE PROVIDED TO THE COMMITTEE, THE GOVERNMENT WILL DISAPPROVE THE RETURN OF IKRIT AND BIRAM VILLAGERS. IN LIEU, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD PROBABLY OFFER "VERY LIBERAL" COMPENSATION.

5. AMONG OTHER ELEMENTS OF HIS PROPOSED PROGRAM FOR ISRAEL'S ARABS, GUR ARYEH HOPES THAT THERE WILL BE NO FURTHER LAND EXPROPRIATIONS AND NO MILITARY SERVICE OR ALTERNATE SERVICE FOR ISRAELI ARABS ("THEY DON'T WANT IT").

6. JORDAN AND ISRAEL HAVE AGREED ON A THIRD JORDAN RIVER BRIDGE "WHEN ISRAEL CAN PUT UP THE MONEY FOR IT," GUR ARYEH SAID. AND HE HAS RELIABLE REPORTS (FROM SUHAYL SHUKRI, FATHER-IN-LAW TO ZAID RIFAI) THAT A GROUP OF ISRAELI ARABS MAY SOON MAKE THE PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA.

LEWIS

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